

MINUTES OF THE AGM HELD ON THURSDAY, 9TH JUNE 2022 AT HOLIDAY INN & VIA ZOOM

Community Council		
Name	Position	Present
Mervyn Barr	Chair	✓ via zoom
Malcolm Collie	Member	✓ via zoom
Heather Cook	Member	*
Donald Davidson	Member	✓ via zoom
Becky Ferguson	Member	✓
Audrey Findlay	Member	✓
Ben Horsburgh	Associate Member	✓ via zoom
Kate Lumsden	Member	✓
Alan McCue	Member	✓
Elaine Manley	Member	✓
William Munro	Vice-Chair	x
Gordon Prentice	Treasurer	✓
Diane Priestley	Member	✓
David Ritchie	Secretary	✓
Ken Stewart	Member	x
Raymond Swaffield	Member	✓
Tim Yeomans	Member	✓
Cllr Iris Walker	Ward 13 Councillor	✓
Cllr Ron McKail	Ward 13 Councillor	x
Cllr Craig Miller	Ward 13 Councillor	x
Cllr Fatima Joji	Ward 13 Councillor	✓ via zoom

Members of Public – Louise Gray (via Zoom)

Guest speaker- Heather Arni from SWACAB (via Zoom))

1	<u>Welcome and opening remarks</u> <p>The AGM was chaired by Becky Ferguson as Chair Mervyn Barr was attending by Zoom due to being in isolation after catching Covid. Permission was granted to record the meeting.</p>
2	<u>Apologies</u> <p>Apologies received from Heather Cook, Willie Munro, Ken Stewart, Cllr McKail, Cllr Miller</p>
3	<u>Approval of Minutes of AGM held on 10th June 2021</u> <p>It transpired that David had omitted to circulate the minutes and apologised for that. The office-bearers had seen them and Mervyn advised his approval of them. They will be circulated soon as approved minutes.</p>
4	<u>Consideration of WECC's Annual Report</u> <p>Mervyn read out the below report, prepared by himself and reviewed by the other office-bearers.</p> <p>Welcome to the 2022 WECC AGM – this time last year we were anticipating a significant return to normality, which in the end proved to be a false dawn, but we finally made it, more-or-less, just before Easter this year.</p>

MINUTES OF THE AGM HELD ON THURSDAY, 9TH JUNE 2022 AT HOLIDAY INN & VIA ZOOM

If 2020/2021 was a year of re-establishment 2021/2022 has undoubtedly been a year of consolidation and achievement, and this has been largely due to collaborative spirit and voluntary effort.

Monthly Meetings In the autumn we managed successfully to move back into our “in-person” meeting at the Holiday Inn with full support from management there, and have established a hybrid meeting format so that those who can’t attend physically can do so over “Zoom”. Our thanks to the staff and management of the Holiday Inn for their ongoing support in this and elsewhere for their support to our Xmas Event.

Paths - In 2020, in accordance with Aberdeenshire Council’s Objective of promoting healthier living, WECC Members conceived of the idea of an Orbital Trail to create a 12k fully connected path all the way around Westhill. With the help of a number of volunteers from WECC, Rotary, Westhill Winter Resilience and other non-affiliated individuals, the Trail was completed and formally opened in early August 2021.

Since then further work, principally on planting daffodil bulbs and applying ballast to dry up muddy parts of the Trail (often involving some “heavy-lifting”) has been completed. In fact since the start of the project, we have recorded some 500 hours of voluntary outdoor work on the project; which is a huge testament to the community spirit that exists within Westhill. Again a huge thank you to all volunteers involved.

Elsewhere with the kind permission of the landowners Mr George Bruce and Mr Garry Stewart, and supported by the Men’s Shed, WECC installed a stile at the drystane boundary wall at the Soutarhill Reservoir. The intent of this is to allow access to the stone circle at the top of the hill without damaging the wall or fencing. Please remember this access goes through two working farms and you use it at your own risk. Please observe all signs and take your litter home.

Recently our group of volunteers has cleared the undergrowth from the circular seating area on the corner of Discovery Drive opposite Tesco. This area was originally donated to the community by local businessman Bert McIntosh but has been somewhat neglected recently. Our hope is that now that it has been cleared it will come into more regular use, maybe by Orbital Trail Walkers wishing to “rest their legs”?

And finally regarding Denman Park, WECC have been in negotiation with Landscape Services to repair, extend and upgrade paths around the “dipping” pond. Also the Arnhall Moss Group are to be thanked for their generous donation to fund a feasibility study on possible upgraded treatment facility for drainage water entering the ponds.

It would be remiss of me not to mention and give huge thanks to the common denominator in all these tasks, the person who has led and steered the project teams’ collaborative efforts throughout, namely Gordon Prentice.

Xmas Event - Collaborative voluntary effort broke new ground when this year for the first time, WECC worked in with MAPP Town Centre Management local Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs), and Round Table to put together our most ambitious event ever; and again feedback on the event was generally excellent. A huge thank you to all concerned for helping make this first collaboration such a success, It was great fun along the way and we picked up some tips and ideas to make it even better this year.

MINUTES OF THE AGM HELD ON THURSDAY, 9TH JUNE 2022 AT HOLIDAY INN & VIA ZOOM

Litter Picking - Our litter picking team has been busy throughout the last year; around this time last year we commenced a collaborative effort with Rotary to coordinate and optimise the results of our litter-picking efforts e.g. by avoiding overlaps in areas picked and I'm delighted to report that this approach has been a great success and will be maintained going forward.

Membership/Teamwork – I'm pleased to report that we currently have almost our full membership with 16 Community Councillors appointed from an available quota of 17. This situation is one that we have managed to maintain, with a very low-level of turnover since WECC reformed in March 2020. However we are keen to fill this vacancy to maximize our team's pool of local representation, local knowledge and motivation to help maintain and improve the quality of life in Westhill.

I'd also like to extend a warm welcome to our new elected Councillors Fatima Joji and Craig Miller, and our re-elected Councillors Ron McKail and Iris Walker. Although they are not formal Members of WECC and have no voting rights, they are very welcome as part of the WECC team and are very much part of the team effort that helps us progress our queries, initiatives and projects.

On a wider front I'd also like to extend our thanks to those Council Officers who have directly and indirectly been part of our wider team effort contributing in their own various ways to support our efforts.

Financials – Recently an Independent Verifier has signed our 2021/22 draft accounts and the accompanying Treasurer's Annual Report for has been compiled. I have dealt with some selected highlights below and full details of all aspects of all aspects of our Financials affairs are available through the Treasurer's Annual Report.

Regarding income - I'm delighted to Report that our financial position remains very strong with a healthy surplus of available funds. Again this is due mainly to strong advertising revenue from the Westhill Bulletin, which enabled the Bulletin to realise a surplus of £15,083 this year and is projected to realise a surplus of some £12000 in the next financial year. The Bulletin is a sought after publication and is delivered by a team of volunteers to approximately 5000 households in the Westhill distribution area.

Our thanks to these volunteers and to David Ritchie for his ongoing work as advertising salesman, editor, producer, distributor and financials manager, in maintaining the high editorial standards and reliable supply which make the Bulletin such a popular read.

Elsewhere our thanks to the Vinespring Church who have kindly and generously elected to make a monthly donation of £50 to our Litter Picking Project, with a total contribution this Financial Year of £350

Regarding Donations - We have continued to donate monies from our Community Support Fund to qualifying applicants, although the number of Applications has been less than expected.

And finally special thanks to Gordon Prentice for his professionalism and diligence in maintaining our accounts and associated Reports.

Planning – It's been a quiet year for consideration of significant Planning Applications apart from one major one for the construction of some 55 homes at the Burnland site near Mason Lodge, which is still under consideration by WECC at the time of writing.

MINUTES OF THE AGM HELD ON THURSDAY, 9TH JUNE 2022 AT HOLIDAY INN & VIA ZOOM

Community Action Planning - Last year we noted an Expression of Interest to Aberdeenshire Council in developing a Community Action Plan, where community stakeholders are consulted on what improvements they would like to see in their community, taking account of the specific circumstances of that community. The outcome of this process is a Community Action Plan which details the agreed community priorities for the years ahead.

After a significant delay due to a shortage of key personnel within the Council, we have now got underway with a call to Westhill residents to volunteer to become part of a diverse steering group, representative of all demographics, sectors and areas of the town. Please see page 84 of the Summer 2022 Bulletin if you are interested in volunteering to be part of this group and/or if you have any questions please email: planning wecc@gmail.com

Community Resilience Planning – This subject hasn't been a hot topic of discussion in previous years – until the twin shocks of Storms Arwen and Malik. Coincidentally WECC had received a talk from a Community Resilience expert in late autumn of 2021, just a few weeks before the storms hit. On a first pass compared say to Ballater with its severely destructive flooding risks or Braemar with risks of paralysing heavy snowfalls, the perception was that we in Westhill were at relatively low risk of such events; which may be true but Arwen soon demonstrated how vulnerable we are in Westhill to power cuts that took out cooking and heating facilities along with mobile phone chargers.

Everyone has story to tell but the most concerning message is that these storms are likely to become more frequent due to the effects of environmental change. WECC will be returning to this area in due course but in the meantime residents are encouraged to personally undertake development of a Resilience Plan for their own homes.

Queen's Jubilee – on the 5th June, Westhill Rotarians hosted a very successful Lazy Sunday Afternoon in the grounds of Ashdale Hall. The event attracted mainly families of two and three generations who gathered with their own picnics to listen to background music from the Ceilidh band Dark Island; while children enjoyed the games and amusements; and many enjoyed ice creams and burgers, while everyone basked in beautiful sunshine.

The event was extremely well received and for many highlighted the community and family focus of the residents of Westhill. WECC contributed £500 pounds towards the costs of hosting the event and our thanks and congratulations to Dave Dent and his fellow Rotarians for hosting such a successful afternoon.

Later in the year we will be planting some 100+ trees as part of the Queens Green Canopy Project.

And finally I'm delighted to report that just this week Aberdeenshire Councillors have unanimously approved our request to name the stretch of road from Tesco to the Brodiach traffic lights "Jubilee Drive"; this as a permanent memento of the Jubilee Celebrations.

Finally thanks to everyone directly and indirectly involved with the WECC for supporting us in achieving a successful year, whether as a member, supporter or volunteer and we look forward to continuing successes next year.

Becky thanked Mervyn for his very comprehensive report.

MINUTES OF THE AGM HELD ON THURSDAY, 9TH JUNE 2022 AT HOLIDAY INN & VIA ZOOM

5 **Consideration & Approval of the independently verified Statement of Accounts for year ended 31 March 2022**

Gordon Prentice reported that 2021/22 could be characterised as a year of financial recovery and consolidation, with the final outcome – a surplus of £6,503 – both unintended and much better than planned, and summarised as follows:

Actual Budget

Surplus from Westhill Bulletin	15,083	10,000
Net Spend on Projects	(5,668)	(4,958)
Donations to Local Voluntary Groups	(1,725)	(4,000)
(Deficit)/Surplus from Normal Operations	(1,187)	(939)
	6,503	103

The table above shows that we achieved a much higher surplus from publication of the Westhill Bulletin than planned, thanks largely to the popularity of the Bulletin as an effective channel to the local market of Westhill and district. The other key point was the surprisingly small number of applications to the Community Support Fund. Only five applications were received, with four awards totalling £1,725 being made and the fifth pledged.

Income

Income from **Westhill Bulletin** advertisers was up by £6,985 [19.5%] year on year, suggesting confidence in the underlying strength of the local economy. Page numbers were very similar to last year, and with production costs only 2% more, there was a resulting contribution of £15,083, £6,242 more than prior year, and £2,000 more than pre-pandemic. It is largely this surplus that allows WECC the flexibility to invest surpluses back into the community.

Thanks go to Aberdeenshire Council for maintaining the payment of an Admin Grant which goes a long way to paying for the costs of honoraria to our volunteer members for carrying out important and necessary administrative tasks [see below].

Only one funding application was made to Aberdeenshire Council last year as we were still carrying over £6,757 from prior year. This new application raised a further £2,046 to upgrade the Lawsonsedale sector of the Westhill Orbital Trail [WOT].

In addition, Vinespring Church kindly offered to donate £50 per month to the community's voluntary, monthly litter picking efforts starting in September last.

Expenditure

Honoraria payments were made to members for recording minutes of meetings, performing secretarial duties and for managing all aspects of production and distribution of the Westhill Bulletin. These were paid at the same rates as paid in the two previous years, and at considerably less cost than employing from the local market.

Donations to local Voluntary Groups: As noted above, £4,000 was set aside to donate to local groups, but there were fewer applications than expected, resulting in £1,725 being donated to 4 groups, mainly to assist with pre-school activities, but also including a donation to the Tennis Club for court treatment work pre-season.

Projects: Net spend on projects was £710 higher than planned but £1,300 less than last year. WECC had to match-fund the £2,046 for WOT upgrade work received from Aberdeenshire Council, and we spent £2,316 on Greening Westhill [flower tubs, hanging baskets and related watering systems for the town

MINUTES OF THE AGM HELD ON THURSDAY, 9TH JUNE 2022 AT HOLIDAY INN & VIA ZOOM

	<p>centre]. In total, £11,712 was spent on five projects to improve the look and feel of the town – Christmas Lights, Denman Park, Town Centre Planting, Litter Picking and the Westhill Orbital Trail. Of this total, £6,044 was reimbursed by Aberdeenshire Council, leaving a balance of £5,668 to be self-funded.</p> <p>Analysis of Funds in Bank</p> <p>At year end, WECC had £35,732 in the bank. After setting aside outstanding commitments for prepaid advertisements, project funding unspent and one pledged donation of £1,000, the General Reserve at year end was £13,928 against a notional target of £10,000. The General Reserve is set aside to provide for contingencies, asset replacements and unforeseen projects that might help meet our objectives.</p> <p>2022/23</p> <p>This coming year, we plan more of the same, relying on the assumption that the Bulletin will contribute around £12,000.</p> <p>The annual accounts were approved</p>
6	<p><u>Change of Constitution to allow 2 Vice-Chairs</u></p> <p>David advised that the wording for the proposed change had been circulated 2 weeks ago.</p> <p>Clause 6.1 currently reads :</p> <p><i>The WECC, at its first meeting after the initial and subsequent elections, shall elect one of its Members to be Chairperson and may elect one of its Members to be Vice-Chairperson.</i></p> <p>The proposed change is to add an additional sentence, as follows:</p> <p><i>WECC may, at its discretion, appoint a second Vice-Chairperson if it is deemed to help to strengthen the resilience of the Community Council.</i></p> <p>There is a few other references to 'Vice-Chairperson' that can be changed to 'Vice-Chairperson(s)'</p> <p>The change was approved.</p>
7	<p><u>Election of Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary & Treasurer</u></p> <p>Cllr Walker took over as the meeting chairperson temporarily. She sought nominations for WECC Chair. Mervyn Barr was nominated by Gordon Prentice, seconded by Audrey Findlay. There was no further nomination and Mervyn confirmed he was happy to carry on so was elected as Chair.</p> <p>Cllr Walker then sought nominations for Vice-Chair. Willie Munro was nominated by Audrey Findlay, seconded by Diane Priestley. Willie wasn't present but had intimated he was happy to carry on so was elected as one of the Vice-Chairs. Becky Ferguson was nominated for the second Vice-Chair by Kate Lumsden, seconded by Tim Yeomans. Becky accepted this position.</p> <p>Cllr Walker then sought nominations for Secretary. David Ritchie was nominated by Mervyn Barr, seconded by Raymond Swaffield. David confirmed he was happy to carry on so was elected as Secretary.</p> <p>Cllr Walker then sought nominations for Treasurer. Gordon Prentice was nominated by Raymond Swaffield, seconded by Tim Yeomans. Gordon confirmed he was happy to carry on so was elected as Treasurer.</p>

MINUTES OF THE AGM HELD ON THURSDAY, 9TH JUNE 2022 AT HOLIDAY INN & VIA ZOOM

8	<p><u>Guest Speaker</u> - Heather Arni, Manager South West Aberdeenshire Citizens Advice Bureau</p> <p>David explained that Heather was attending on Zoom as the CAB rules would not allow her to use her laptop with the hotel Wi-Fi system.</p> <p>Heather has been manager at the SWACAB for 6 months, after Eveline Crossan retired</p> <p>She gave her background of a very varied career and most roles included interaction with Citizens Advice.</p> <p>Heather summarised the aims of CAB and some statistics :-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There are 59 Bureaux in Scotland, each one an independent charity - In first quarter of 2022, SWACAB has helped 600 people across a large geographical area <p>Issues we deal with- Debt, Consumer, Employment, Benefits, Legal Issues, Immigration, Housing, Eviction, Homelessness, Family/Personal, Neighbour issues, Health</p> <p>What we did – 2020 to 2021:-</p> <p>No. of individuals accessing the service- 2758</p> <p>Client Financial Gain - £1,638,638</p> <p>Level of Debt Handles - £883,032</p> <p>65% of our staff are volunteers. The advisors undergo extensive training</p> <p>The Advice provided to clients is free, independent, impartial, generalist advice.</p> <p>The Specialist Advice provided by paid staff covers Money advice, Debt, Energy, Gambling Support & Pension Wise</p> <p>An Outreach service is provided to other towns in the Shire. Also do home visits</p> <p>The volunteer advisers do an agreed number of hours per week.</p> <p>Heather outlined the reasons to volunteer and some volunteer comments.</p> <p>Heather summarised a recent complex case of someone whose house was going to be repossessed.</p> <p>There has been a recent significant increase in number of enquiries, especially around debt.</p> <p>Becky thanked Heather for a very informative presentation.</p>
9	<p><u>Close of Meeting.</u> Meeting closed at 8.15, and the normal monthly meeting started at 8.30pm.</p>